

Rental License Minimum Standards for Basement Bedrooms

The building and property maintenance codes have some basic requirements for bedrooms in a basement. These requirements apply to each basement bedroom in all residential properties in Berwyn Heights. These requirements are life safety standards and are therefore not grandfathered. Every rental property must comply with all these minimum standards in order to be licensed as a rental in Berwyn Heights:

Emergency escape and rescue openings: Every basement bedroom (called sleeping rooms in the building code) must have an egress window **OR** an exterior door that opens directly outside to the yard. These are called emergency escape and rescue opening by the building code.

Egress windows: An egress window must meet **ALL** the following minimum standards:

- A. A window with a minimum height of opening of 24 inches
- B. A window with a minimum net clear opening — the actual opening through which a person must crawl — of 5.7 square feet.
- C. A sill height no higher than 44 inches above the floor
- D. Must open to the outside and open easily without the use of keys or tools
- E. If the window is below grade a window well must be provided. The window well shall have a floor space of at least 9 square feet with minimum dimensions of 36 inches wide and long. A permanent ladder or steps if the window well depth is more than 44 inches.

Egress doors: An egress door must meet **ALL** the following minimum standards:

- A. A door with a minimum height opening of 6.5 ft (78 inches)
- B. A door with a minimum width opening of 32 inches
- C. An egress door must exit directly into the yard or court that opens to a public way. Egress doors cannot open to another room, sleeping room or bathroom
- D. Must open to the outside and open easily without the use of keys or tools
- E. Any grates or coverings shall be easily removable from the inside without the use of keys or tools.
- F. An egress door shall not be covered by a curtain or have a mirror installed.

Where basements contain one or more sleeping rooms, emergency escape and rescue openings shall be required in each sleeping room but shall not be required in adjoining areas of the basement. Such openings shall open into a public way or yard or court that opens to a public way.

Ceiling height: Must have a ceiling height of not less than 7ft 6 inches.

Access to bedrooms: Bedrooms shall not be the only access to other bedrooms or to other habitable spaces.

Access to bathrooms: Every bedroom shall have access to not less than one bathroom and shower without passing through another bedroom. Every bedroom in a dwelling unit shall have access to not less than one bathroom and shower on the same story as the bedroom or an adjacent story. Residents must have access to a bathroom and shower without having to climb two sets of stairs.

Bedroom occupancy limits: Every bedroom shall contain not less than 70 square feet and every bedroom occupied by more than one person shall contain not less than 50 square feet of floor area for each occupant of that room.

Basements as a separate dwelling unit: Basement apartments are only allowed as a separate unit if a separate Occupancy Permit has been issued for the basement as a separate apartment by Prince George's County. Basements rented as separate dwelling units have a number of additional requirements, in addition to those described above.

For more information, contact the Berwyn Heights Code Compliance Department at (301) 513-9331